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SUBJECT: SUMMER 2008: TRENDS ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN SUDAN

REF: KHARTOUM 1121

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SUMMARY

11. (U) BEGIN SUMMARY: During July and August, USAID's field officers provided information and analysis on sector trends throughout Sudan.

Examining the issues of safety and insecurity, food security, nutrition, health, returns, integration, and political process on a broader scale offers a chance to recognize and support positive changes, as well as an opportunity to mitigate those that are negative. Although the analysis offered few surprises, reports indicated unanticipated positive gains in the area of health interventions. By continuing to track and support the international partnership with Sudanese efforts for progress, Embassy Khartoum and USAID programming continues to play an active role in helping Sudan establish peace and move towards relief and recovery activities.
END SUMMARY.

SECURITY

12. (U) In early July, the UN raised the security levels to Phase III in non-Darfur Sudan and Phase IV in Darfur. While such a shift continues to impact the work of UN agencies and USAID's implementing partners, prior to the Phase shift, USAID field officers captured additional causes for concern, including increased incidents of carjacking, ongoing conflict, subsequent displacement, and government clashes with rebel forces.

13. (SBU) Throughout Darfur, carjacking has increased and the modes and locations of recent incidents indicate new disturbing trends. In addition to increased attacks in urban areas of Darfur, USAID field officers noted an increase in livestock theft, attacks on empty UN convoys, and carjackers dressed as UN employees. In areas

of West Darfur, the situation in nearby eastern Chad continues to impact local security. As a result of cross-border incursions in mid June, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) remain cautious regarding operations in West Darfur, despite UN efforts to assure partners and restart programs. Throughout West Darfur, incidents of banditry have increased. (NOTE: Such an increase underscores a government security apparatus that is either unwilling or unable to establish law and order, though we suspect the latter. END NOTE.) Some areas of West Darfur's southern corridor, including Mukjar, continue to enjoy relative calm, although due to the proximity of instability and conflict, the situation could change at any time.

14. (SBU) In North Darfur, the early summer months witnessed regrouping of armed movements. According to the UN, military and political regrouping of alliances among rebel groups and Arab militias offered cause for anxiety for Darfuris in these chronically problematic areas. In addition, field reports indicate a greater frequency of clashes among various factions of the Sudanese Liberation Army.

15. (SBU) In South Darfur, insecurity and bureaucratic impediments continued to interfere with humanitarian access and assistance. In June and July, security and humanitarian access deteriorated due to localized fighting between ethnic groups, as well as the tightening of government restrictions. As populations flee areas of conflict, subsequent displacements have compounded an already-critical humanitarian situation. In addition, humanitarian agencies reported an increased incidence of government obstruction through denying or delaying critical supplies e.g. fuel, demanding new requirements without any forewarning, introducing unexplained flight bans, and restricting access. The increasing list of bureaucratic impediments continues to complicate assistance efforts.

16. (U) In other areas of Sudan, implementing partners and UN

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agencies await the impact of the recent change in UN security phases on humanitarian programs and actors. However, despite the shift by the UN, localized conflicts in Southern Kordofan and a shooting incident in Agok in early July have perpetuated an environment of heightened caution and tension. To date, relief agencies continue program implementation while maintaining a quiet caution and strict attention to changes in the situation. NGOs continued to react and adapt flexibly in June and July. Nevertheless, further deterioration in security in the coming months due to on-going conflict, reduction in passable roads due to the rainy season, and staff relocations owing to the UN security phase change, could result in a further decrease in access, and thus raise even higher the stakes for humanitarian agencies and beneficiaries. As of mid August, NGOs and UN agencies report continued normal operations overall; however, concerns remain for the long-term effects of reduced staffing and supplies.

FOOD SECURITY

17. (U) Throughout Sudan, humanitarians and UN agencies remain concerned about food security and increasing food prices. In July, representatives from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated that Darfur remains prone to a near doubling of some commodity prices since 2007, as well as poor harvest, cross-border movement of food supplies, and continued tribal conflict. In addition, FAO reported incidents of people selling livestock to purchase food, one of the critical indicators for a food insecure situation. Although FAO continues to provide seeds and the UN World Food Program has provided a reduced food ration since May, food insecurity remains an eminent threat in Darfur. In addition, USAID staff report that some residents have refused assistance in the form of seeds and tools, believing erroneously that the seed donation program and WFP's recent ration cuts are indicative of the end of all food aid to Darfur.

18. (U) In July, FAO raised concerns regarding the impact of increasing global food prices on markets in Southern and eastern Sudan. Southern Sudan is dependent on food imports from neighboring

countries, particularly Uganda and Kenya, and humanitarian agencies and the Sudanese government and implementing partners continue to monitor the situation closely. In addition, the food security problem in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State continues to affect returnees and host communities in the area. Food insecurity is also a concern in eastern Sudan, particularly Kassala State. In early August, USAID staff visited Kassala and met with FAO, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), UN agencies, and NGOs to discuss the situation in Kassala. A recent report by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) reported worrisome indicators, including the delayed rainy season, an increase in cereal prices, a rise in animal feed prices, high rates of animal mortality, and the sharp decline of livestock prices in the local markets. According to FAO, the cereal price for a 50 kg bag of sorghum in Kassala has increased from 30 SDG in summer 2007 to 118 SDG in summer 2008. Sorghum is the main staple in Kassala State and 30 percent of the quantities sold go for animal feed. According to field sources, during July locally produced animal feed prices doubled or tripled. The MoA report indicates that Kassala typically needs 21,000 MT of cereals per month for human and animal consumption; however, as of July and August, the state is experiencing a monthly gap of at least 4,900 MT.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

¶9. (U) Overall, USAID staff noted positive indicators regarding the health situation in Sudan. To date, many of the seasonal health concerns have been mitigated by increased coping mechanisms as well as targeted programming by humanitarian agencies. In Darfur,

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overall, the endemic diseases including diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, and malaria continue to display the same seasonal trends as in June and July 2007. Although, as of late July, partners had not documented any cases of acute watery diarrhea in South Darfur, humanitarian agencies continue to intensify hygiene-promotion activities to prevent a possible outbreak with the approach of the rainy season.

¶10. (U) According to USAID field reports, the health situation in northern Sudan and the Three Areas remains stable, with only a few small suspected outbreaks occurring during the reporting period. With the onset of the rainy season, cases of acute watery diarrhea have risen in Southern Sudan and northern Sudan, particularly Gedaref State. In addition, health agencies have responded to suspected acute watery diarrhea outbreaks in Juba and Magwi counties. Since early August, rains in Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State have caused heavy flooding, displacement, and concerns regarding a potential cholera outbreak. UN agencies and NGOs have responded with health, water/sanitation, and hygiene services, and are monitoring the situation closely. In addition, the UN has activated a national flood awareness taskforce which has developed contingency plans and pre-positioned supplies in the event of floods. Although the situation remains fairly stable, the peak of the flood season is typically around mid-September.

¶11. (U) Since June, NGOs have reported increasing levels of malnutrition among Abyei internally displaced persons (IDPs) sheltering in Agok, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. Since late June, humanitarian agencies have conducted a rapid assessment of the situation in Agok, followed by a nutritional survey among IDPs and the host community in Agok. Health agency staff working in Agok expect that the results of the latest survey will confirm that the high rates of malnutrition in Agok are connected to poor sanitation conditions rather than lack of access to food.

RETURNS

¶12. (U) Due to the ongoing rainy season, the UN's organized returns programs concluded in late June, but limited spontaneous returns continued throughout June and July. Accumulated returns reached 2.1 million IDPs and refugees, 200,000 of which were organized returns

as of the end of May. According to the UN, approximately 27,000 IDPs and refugees have returned since the beginning of 2008. UNHCR reported that 2,411 persons reached Central and Eastern Equatoria states from Uganda under May's organized voluntary repatriation program. The latest arrivals bring the total repatriation of Sudanese refugees, including spontaneous movement, to approximately 288,002 persons since 2005. Of this number, 135,082 returned under the organized and assisted self-repatriation programs. According to the organizers, the joint organized return unit assisted significant numbers of IDPs during the last two years, and organizers foresee fewer returns in 2009, as compared with previous years.

¶13. (SBU) The UN is making preparations to support spontaneous returns to Abyei, but to date only a small number of IDPs have returned. As of late July, the majority of the 27,000 IDPs displaced to Agok from Abyei continued to receive humanitarian assistance from U.N. agencies and NGOs. As malnutrition remains a concern among the displaced population, humanitarian agencies have augmented efforts to increase access to latrines and safe drinking water in order to mitigate the causal factors of the malnutrition problem in Agok. During an August 9 meeting with US Special Envoy Richard S. Williamson, UNMIS Regional Coordinator David Gressly predicted that future rains and flooding could push people back into Abyei town because the town's plateau location. Gressly stated that people will return despite the lack of services (schools, health clinics, etc.) available in Abyei. Gressly added that the security concerns of relief agencies working in the area may be "overplayed" and that donors need to encourage implementing partners to return to

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Abyei (reftel). According to Gressly's assessment, effective deployment of joint integrated police units (JIPUs) will be an essential element for avoiding future conflict, and UNMIS should provide protection to facilitate voluntary returns.

ASQUINO